

ICONSPADU 2021

International Conference on Sustainable Practices, Development and Urbanisation

**THE INFLUENCE OF INTERNET USAGE ON THE EMOTIONAL
WELL-BEING OF YOUTH**

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Abstract

Malaysia is the 9th country in the world in terms of active users of social media. Almost 80% of the population spends about 8 hours daily browsing the internet. The enforcement of the Movement Control Order (MCO) in 2020 saw a drastic increase in the traffic flow of internet usage by 32% nationwide. However, a few parties abuse digital platforms to attract public attention and have fun on social media. This study aims to analyze internet usage's influence on youth's emotional well-being. The study used a survey design through the distribution of online questionnaires to 436 respondents in Melaka, and the data obtained were analyzed through SPSS 23.0 software. Results indicated that 63% of the respondents use the internet more than 6 hours daily for various purposes and needs. The use of the internet and social media has affected emotional well-being, which is lack of self-confidence ($m = 3.85$), depression ($m = 3.76$), anxiety ($m = 3.21$) and suicide ideation ($m = 2.37$). People must not so compromise the sophistication of technology in its users' human values that it is used to manipulate and infringe on other people's rights. The ethical use of social media and online tools makes the internet a fantastic platform for carrying out various tasks and meeting current needs.

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Keywords: Communication, digital, emotional well-being, internet usage, social media



1. Introduction

Information and communication technology has advanced thanks to the Industrial Revolution 4.0 quickly. (ICT). The development of several online applications and social media platforms has improved human lives. The internet has brought about a positive transformation in the quality of human life. This facility provides complete access to various information quickly and easily. Individuals can improve their knowledge and expand their social network across geographical borders. Through social media, all parties can communicate effortlessly, thus opening up more significant opportunities and the potential to boost many aspects such as education, business, employment, and so on. The Industrial Revolution 4.0 has led to a variety of the latest technological trends on the internet that influence the daily pattern of individual life. Singh and Prajina (2013) stated that people rely on the internet in the modern era, and it is hard to stay away from it. Although the internet provides a variety of facilities, its uncontrolled use has negative impacts on emotional well-being.

The benefits of the internet are significant to the livelihood of humans. Guan and Subrahmanyam (2009) stated that the internet's ethical use improves the emotional well-being of youth. Harmonious social interaction and easy access to information ease all the difficulties that have been obstacles to most things. This fact is supported by Du Rausas et al. (2011), who reiterated that internet use has a positive impact on economic stability and prosperity. This impact is because the internet has opened up tremendous opportunities and potential for business growth and investment. Even so, the sophistication of the internet also has its effects. Excessive internet use has a significant influence on the physical well-being as well as the cognitive and social development of adolescents. According to a study by More and Nalawade (2012), teenagers who spend more time online than in real life have lower self-confidence and less stable emotional states. Similarly, Kraut et al. (2002) discovered that unrestricted internet use had a detrimental effect on cognitive and social development, particularly in adolescents.

1.1. Internet Usage Among Youth in Malaysia

Based on the Youth Societies and Youth Development Act (Amendment) 2019 (Act 668), in Malaysia, youths are defined as aged between 15 and 30. According to the record published by the Department of Statistics Malaysia, the youth population in Malaysia was about 14.9 million in 2020, making up 46.5% of the country's total population. In addition, 76.9% of internet users in Malaysia, or about 24.5 million people, are 15 to 40 years old (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2020). The data concluded that the rate of individuals using the internet in Malaysia is indirectly proportional to age. This finding means the majority of internet users are from the younger population. It was found most of them spend an average of 5 and 8 hours on the internet, where 93.3% of them use the internet to surf social media such as Facebook (91.7%), Instagram (63.1%), Whatsapp (98.7%), and Youtube (80.6%).

Although only 47% of internet users feel safe on social media, the rest perceive digital platforms as at risk of being exposed to cyber threats if they do not remain vigilant. Although according to Omar et al. (2019), when it comes to the youth, they are obsessed and indeed explore their own identity, this situation requires them to communicate with those around them. However, such unbridled interactions put

them vulnerable to exposure to unethical practices on social media. According to a survey by Cyber Security Malaysia (2021), nine types of cybercrime victims are most likely to report them, including content-related crimes, cyber harassment, denial of service attacks, fraud, intrusion attempts, and malicious conduct. The Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 [Act 588], the Computer Crimes Act 1997 [Act 563], the Sedition Act 1948 [Act 15], the Defamation Act 1957 [Act 286], and the Penal Code [Act 574] are some of the laws that the government has put in place to control the usage of social media.

1.2. The Impact of Internet Use on Emotional Well-being

The Internet has become a growing multifunctional interaction platform in the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era. The shift from physical to digital communication has established new norms that benefit consumers. However, it also has the potential to be manipulated by irresponsible parties that trigger cyber harassment (Englander, 2012). Social media is an online digital communication platform for sharing information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos). However, such developments expose consumers to negative impacts such as cyberbullying. Based on the Theory of Reasoned Action, widespread involvement in cyberspace does lead to the threat of cyber harassment explicitly or implicitly due to behaviors that deviate from true human intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

Social media is a public forum where anyone can post remarks. Users can share their opinions on a wide range of topics, from frivolous ones like entertainment and sports to important ones like those involving politics, economics, and religion. Unfortunately, some users disregard proper conversational etiquette and communication ethics. They are free to comment on other users' accounts without regard for decency or manners, even if the critics are strangers to the point where they impugn the victim's honor and reputation. Similar to how users can distribute false information, defamation, and gossip quickly and widely when too much information is available. Such behavior has repercussions and damages other people's reputations (Che Hasniza et al., 2018).

Uncontrolled internet use affects the level of emotional well-being due to poor quality of rest (Alim, 2017). In a way, this can lead to issues of emotional disorders such as anxiety, depression, and stress (Wong et al., 2021). Although the internet is deemed a mechanism to alleviate loneliness and social anxiety, the symptoms of addiction have contributed to the unforeseen impact that affects the quality of life (Singh & Prajina, 2013). Schenk and Fremouw (2012) conclude a significant relationship between cyberbullying and the emotional well-being of adolescents. This tendency makes adolescents vulnerable to emotional instability disorders such as harmful effects, loneliness, anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, and somatic symptoms.

2. Problem Statement

The use of social media websites like Facebook, Whatsapp, and Twitter creates a setting for quick and straightforward social contact. According to Omar et al. (2019), most youths use the internet as a communication platform to connect with their family and friends. The mobile phone has become crucial in maintaining social contact or keeping a tab of close contacts (Chen & Katz, 2009). Youths often use

this device as a communication tool to stay in touch with family members and friends. In addition, they spend time on the internet for shopping purposes, online video games, and the latest news (Jin & Park, 2010). Thus, the positive use of the internet does indeed spark stable and prosperous emotions.

However, unethical internet use that results in addiction can lead to mental disease and impact everyone's physical health, not just the individual (Lanaj et al., 2014). One way this development negatively affects virtual residents is the misuse of facilities to engage in behaviors that go against civil law and consumerism ethics. Cyberbullying, the spread of untrue information, libel and misinformation, and online transaction fraud are a few. In addition, due to people's greater reliance on the internet for communication and conducting business due to the government's Movement Control Order (MCO) enacted during the COVID-19 epidemic, there are more instances of online abuse. Since the MCO's introduction, the demand for broadband has dramatically increased, according to the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (2020), as more and more work-related activities, education, conferences, and meetings are being held at home. As a result, Internet traffic flow surged by 23.5 percent nationwide during the first week of MCO due to compliance, and it grew by an additional 8.6 percent during the following week.

According to studies by Akbulut et al. (2010), Bauman (2013), and Zhou et al. (2013), people who use the internet frequently engage in cyber harassment. The results align with the media effects paradigm, emphasizing how media can impact people's propensities and behavior (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013). Additionally, this is consistent with the online disinhibition effect, which holds that people generally express their feelings and are free to engage in any activity without restraint in the digital ecosystem (Ho & McLeod, 2008; Suler, 2004). Someone's innate response to this circumstance is to act aggressively toward others (Espelage et al., 2013). Additionally, engaging in dangerous internet activities, including sending or accepting friend requests from strangers (Görzig & Lafsson, 2013; Kwan & Skoric, 2013) or publishing private information or images online (Kwan & Skoric, 2013; Mesch, 2009) could put them at risk for cyberattacks.

Internet users have also been shown to undergo emotional stress due to online harassment, and some are worried about the level of security on the internet. In addition, internet users are upset because they can't take the necessary precautions due to the offenders' identity ambiguity and concealment (Sourander et al., 2010). A decline in academic performance, a loss of self-confidence, emotional instability, and mental and physical injuries are all side effects of cyberbullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2008). Willard (2006) asserts that given its potential for occurrence anywhere and the perpetrators' ability to stay anonymous, cyberbullying has more severe consequences than physical bullying. Ironically, people are becoming increasingly willing to use harsh, insulting, and disrespectful language online. In addition, some people take advantage of anonymity by creating a few bogus accounts with harmful intentions. Using 1382 young people between the ages of 15 and 30, the Malaysian Institute for Research in Youth Development (MIRYD) conducted a study in 2017. The Northern Zone, Eastern Zone, Central Zone, Southern Zone, Sabah, and Sarawak are the six zones from which the respondents are drawn. This research examines the issue of cyberbullying among young people in Malaysia. The findings revealed that 62.3 percent of all respondents were young people who had experienced cyberbullying, and 1.21 percent of those people had experienced emotional stress to the point of considering suicide (MIRYD, 2017).

3. Research Questions

This study focuses on the influence of internet usage on the emotional well-being propensity of youths in Melaka. Thus, the research question of this study:

- a) What are the internet and social media use patterns among youths in Melaka?
- b) To what extent is the emotional well-being based on the duration of internet use among youths in Melaka?

4. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to identify the influence of internet usage on emotional well-being based on the duration of internet use among youths in Melaka. Specifically, this research is based on the youth's perspective to gain some vital evidence on actualized affordances. Hence, the initial assumption of the study is that since youths are mostly seen as hardcore users of the internet platform, they also have the potential to get involved in cybercrime activities.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Research Design

The research is the quantitative survey type of research. The link to the online survey was distributed through social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Email. Social media platforms make it easy to reach the public as the study focuses on public response.

5.2. Sampling Technique

The study used a convenient sampling technique which was nonprobability sampling. According to Lavrakas (2008), in non-probability sampling, the population may not be well denned, and non-probability sampling is often divided into three purposive categories, convenience and quota sampling. The study used a convenience sampling technique where the target respondents were youths of various types: workers in the government and private sector, self-employed, students, and unemployed. The total number of respondents for the survey was 436.

5.3. Research Measurement

The questionnaire comprised 40 questions and included the demographic section containing ordinal, nominal, and scales to measure the data. All the questionnaire was related to the research objectives of the research. First, a pilot study was conducted to indicate the reliability and validity of this survey. Then the data obtained was analyzed via Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

5.4. Data Analysis

The method used for data analysis was through Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) software version 23. Data analysis included creating the survey stage, pilot testing, and data transferring. The survey or questionnaire was designed with questions that were related to the research objectives of the research. First, the questionnaire was distributed to the first 40 respondents to identify the reliability of the study. Then, the survey was continued to complete the data of 436 responses, and the data collected were transferred to SPSS software for analysis and finding purposes. Researchers used the Independents Sample T-Test and One Way Anova for the data analysis.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Mean Score	Level
1.00 to 2.33	Low
2.34 to 3.67	Medium
3.68 to 5.00	High

Table 1 demonstrates how the five-point scale interval undergoes division to obtain the mean score. The five-point Likert scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For the mean score calculation, the value is categorized into three measure levels: low, medium, and high. Then, 5 (Likert scale: strongly agree) has one point deducted (Likert scale: strongly disagree) and then divided by 3 (a measure of mean level).

Therefore, the interval between each mean level is 1.33. A mean score of 1.00 to 2.33 is deemed low; a mean score between 2.34 and 3.67 is categorized medium-level measure, whereas a mean score of 3.68 to 5.00 is a high-level measure.

6. Findings

6.1. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

	Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Men	140	32.1
	Women	296	67.9
Age	15 to 25 years old	214	72.3
	25 to 35 years old	65	21.9
	35 to 45 years old	17	5.8
Frequently Used Social Media	Facebook	14	4.6
	Twitter	41	13.8
	Whatsapp	111	37.4
	Telegram	4	1.4
	Instagram	52	17.4
	Youtube	44	14.7

	Tik Tok	21	7.1
	Others	12	3.6
Purpose of Surfing the Internet	Play games	12	4.1
	Information/Learning	91	30.7
	Get Rid of Boredom	104	35.1
	Completing Assignments	72	24.3
	Others	17	5.8
Internet Surfing Period	Below 1 hour	2	0.5
	1 to 3 hours	34	11.5
	4 to 6 hours	111	37.4
	6 hours and above	149	50.6

The number and percentage of respondents by age are shown in Table 2. According to the demographic analysis, this survey included 296 female and 140 male respondents. This study's age ranges are divided into three categories: 15 to 25 years, 25 to 35 years, and 35 to 45 years. Two hundred fourteen respondents, or 72.3 percent, fall into the 15 to 25 age group, followed by 65 respondents, or 21.9 percent, in the 25 to 35 age group, and 17 respondents, or 1.7 percent, in the 35 to 45 age group (5.8 percent). The majority of respondents use the Whatsapp application, which has 111 users (37.4%), followed by Instagram, which has 52 users (17.4%), Youtube, which has 44 users (14.7%), Twitter, which has 41 users (13.8%), Tik Tok, which has 21 users (7.1%), Facebook, which has 14 users (4.6%), and Telegram, which has four users (1.4 percent).

The majority of respondents (104, or 35.1%) say they use the internet to kill boredom, followed by 91 others, or 30.7%, who say they do it to learn something new, followed by 72 others, or 24.3%, who say they use it to finish work, and as many as 12 others, who say they use it to play games (4.1 percent). The most recent demographic analysis looks at different internet usage degrees, broken down into four categories: less than an hour, between one and three hours, between four and six hours, and more than six hours. The majority of respondents—149 persons, or 50.6 percent—surf the internet for 6 hours or longer, followed by 111 respondents for 4 to 6 hours (37.4 percent), 34 for 1 to 3 hours (11.5 percent), and two respondents for less than an hour (0.5 percent).

6.2. The Impact of Internet Use on The Emotional Well-being

ANOVA analyses are the following (Table 3):

Table 3. Duration of Internet Use

Variable	M	SD
Below 1 hour	2.25	.265
1 to 3 hours	2.22	.672
4 to 6 hours	2.52	.622
6 hours and above	2.73	.714

Table 3 shows the period of internet use among youths in Melaka. On average, the group of youth recorded the highest internet usage, spending more than six hours a day using the internet (M: 2.73). Implementing the Movement Control Order has indeed increased the reliance on internet platforms.

However, the use of the internet for a prolonged period shall be managed prudently. According to Akbulut et al. (2010) and Zhou et al. (2013), individuals who spend more time on the internet are more vulnerable to cyberattacks and emotional instability disorder.

Table 4. The Impact of Internet Use

Item	M	SD
Depression	3.76	1.314
Anxiety	3.21	1.207
Lack of Confident	3.85	1.293
Suicide Ideation	2.37	1.164

Table 4 shows internet use's effect on youth's emotional well-being. Based on the study, internet use is found to have a significant impact on the emotional well-being of youth. The group that spends much time on the internet is prone to emotional disorders such as depression (M: 3.76) and anxiety (M: 3.21). Surprisingly, some youths have suffered from severe repercussions to the point of being triggered by the idea of committing suicide (M: 2.37). As expected, the findings conclude that the youths who spend more time on the internet and have an uncontrolled pattern of internet users are more at risk of being exposed to emotional disorders. These results are consistent with a study by Charisse (2014), which demonstrated the experience of being a cyber victim is associated with suicidal ideation. The more severe the cyber harassment, the higher the degree of emotional stress that the victims have to deal with, thus contributing to self-inflicted injuries and suicidal behaviors.

7. Conclusion

The Internet has become an essential platform in line with the advancement of the Digital Revolution 4.0 era. It significantly facilitates many aspects of human life, such as employment, education, and communication. However, uncontrolled internet use exposes youth to the threat of cyberattacks and emotional disorders. Social media and online applications' ethical standards make the internet a perfect platform for carrying out numerous tasks and assisting consumers in meeting their immediate needs. Therefore, using this technical innovation wisely and practicing self-preservation is essential to building a secure and peaceful digital ecology. To make sure that there are no unethical behaviors on the digital platform, everyone's collaboration and support are essential.

Acknowledgments

This paper is one of the research output made for fulfilling the TEJA Research Grant requirement under the project entitled, 'Cyber Bullying Behavior In Digital Media Among Youth In Melaka According To Islamic Perspective' numbered GDT2021/1-7.

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